

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE QURAN

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In the name of Allah, the Most Compassionate, the Most Merciful

FOREWORD

All praise and thanks to Allah, the One, the Supreme, the Most Compassionate, the Most Merciful and the Most Forgiving. There is no strength to do any good or to avoid any evil except through His Grace and Mercy. I depend entirely upon His Mercy and put all of my affairs into His Hands.

Allah's peace and blessings be upon His servant, the blessed Prophet Muhammad, the last of Allah's Messengers, the seal of Prophethood, Allah's mercy to worlds, the illuminating light, and my intercessor on the Day of Judgement. Allah's peace and blessings be upon him, his family members, his companions and all those who follow him.

All the books that exist in the world today and all the books that the mankind has witnessed in the entire history of human civilization have a few things in common; all of these are written by human beings, relate to a certain domain of human knowledge, and have a common format. The books are divided into chapters, each chapter discusses one topic, and each topic presents the information in a certain sequence.

The Quran on the other hand is not a book in this sense. It has its own unique features. It is not written or compiled by a human being but is a divine Revelation. It does not relate to human knowledge, but relates to human faith. In fact, it is the only book on the surface of earth that deals

with faith. As such it does not follow the normal format of a human book. It has own format, its own topics and its own style of discussion. A casual reader should not compare Quran with a human book. He should accept that it is the most unique and the only book of its kind.

Following pages are a humble efforts to help a casual reader understand and appreciate the unique features and beauties of this Blessed Revelation.

Three persons worked hand in hand with me in the final preparation of this work. These are, Dr. Carol Etzel of the University of Texas System, at Houston; Dr. Aarifeen Lodhi, of Texas Tech University, at Lubbock, and Mr. Shahid Kamal Pasha, the renowned writer and journalist of Pakistan. May Allah accept their efforts.

I earnestly pray that Allah, the Exalted, accepts my humble efforts and makes it a means for a better understanding of His Divine Message, the Quran.

Dr. Mazhar Kazi
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Chapter 1

RELIABILITY OF THE QURAN

For Muslims the Quran is the last but not the only Book revealed by Allah, the Exalted. It is, however, the only Divine Book which remained fully intact from the time of its revelation until the present time. Even the non-Muslim scholars have always accepted this fact. It was revealed to Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him) as the ultimate and the final guidance for mankind. This glorious revelation is seen as the most authentic in all senses of the terms and scales available to mankind. In retrospect, it has commanded the most unimpeachable belief by millions of people in all parts of the world as the most valid document ever preserved. Each and every word, even the individual alphabets of this book, have been preserved without the slightest alteration, admixture or adulteration whatsoever. It has not only been preserved as a written document in a book form but has also been preserved in the memory of countless people at all times, from generation to generation and place to place for the last fourteen centuries. This has further ensured the authenticity of preservation and transmission of the Quran.

Two of the scientific techniques commonly used to ascertain the authenticity of a finding or report are to establish its reliability and validity. Webster's dictionary (1997) explains the word "reliable" as trustworthy and the word "valid" as sound and logical. Oxford dictionary (1995) explains the word "reliable" as able to be relied upon, and the word "valid" as having legal force, sound to the point and logical.

Based on these definitions, we can explain the two words by a simple example. Suppose several people listened to a commercial on a radio station. It stated that every item in a certain store was on sale for fifty percent off. All those who heard this commercial passed on this information to a few other persons, who in turn passed it on to some others. If in this process of transmission, every person gave identical information, then this information would be called "reliable". Furthermore, when people go to the store and find that everything was on sale for fifty percent off, then this information would be called "valid", otherwise the information would be invalid. Thus an information can be reliable but invalid and vice versa.

Let us now examine the reliability of the Quran with the analogy of the above example. If it can be established that no change has occurred in the transmission of the Quran from the time of Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) to different generations, and from place to place and that the Quran today is exactly in the same form in which Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) delivered it to mankind, this will establish the "reliability" of the Quran. The following pages provide historical evidence that establish the reliability of the Quran beyond any shadow of doubt.

RELIABILITY OF THE QURAN

Muslims have utilized two different methods for the preservation and transmission of the Quran. First, oral by memorization; second, written by documentation. Following are the details of these methods.

Oral transmission by memorization

Prophet Mohammad (PUBH) was the first "Hafiz" (memorizer) of the entire Quran. Whenever a verse was revealed, he would commit it to his memory. Sometimes, during the periods of revelation, he would repeat the verses hurriedly lest he forgets them. Allah, the Exalted, assured him that He himself would preserve the Quran in his memory. The Quran states:

Move not your tongue concerning (the Quran) to make haste therewith. Indeed it is upon Us (Allah) to collect it and give you the ability to recite it (from your memory). So when We have recited it, then follow its recitation. Then it is upon Us, to make it clear to you.

Qiyamah 75: 16-19

These verses clearly state that whatever was revealed to Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) in the form of the Quran was also preserved in his memory by Allah, the Exalted. This enabled him to deliver the Quran to mankind in exactly the same form and text in which he received it from Allah, the Exalted.

The books of Ahadith (sayings of the Prophet) report that Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) used to recite the portion of the Quran revealed upto that time to angel Gabriel during the month of fasting and also listened to it from him. It is also reported that the year the Prophet (PBUH) died, he recited the entire Quran twice and listened to the entire Quran twice from angel Gabriel. The books of history and Ahadith state that Zaid bin Thabit, the chief scribe of the Quran, was present during this last recitation and listening of the Quran by Prophet Mohammad (PBUH).

The Prophet (PBUH) also instructed his companions to learn and memorize the Quran. There are numerous Ahadith that describe the virtues of learning and teaching the Quran. The following Hadith is reported by a famous companion, Abdullah bin Masud .

The Blessed Prophet (PBUH) stated:

The superior most among you are those who learn the Quran and teach it to others".
(Bukhari)

With this intention, countless companions memorized certain portions or the entire Quran. History has preserved the names of many of his companions who had memorized the entire Quran. Additionally, recitation of verses of the Quran is an integral part of the five obligatory daily prayers. Hence all of his companions memorized a certain portion of the Quran for performing their daily prayers. Moreover, the Prophet (PBUH) would also recite a portion of the Quran aloud while leading three of the five daily prayers. A number of his companions thus daily listened to various portions of the Quran from the Prophet (PBUH). This further enabled a large group of his companions to memorize the Quran.

Establishment of Taraweeh Salat (prayer) during the month of fasting has been a Muslim practice since the time of the Prophet's companions. A unique feature of this Salat is that the person who leads it is usually a Hafiz (one who memorizes the entire Quran). He completes the recitation of the entire Quran during the month of fasting while leading the Taraweeh Salat. This practice has helped countless Muslims of all generations to memorize the entire Quran. In fact, every Muslim community, whether

small or large, always has a few persons who have memorized the entire Quran. These persons lead the Taraweeh Salat in their respective communities every year and complete the recitation of the entire Quran during the month of fasting.

Every Muslim generation had several "Huffaz (plural of Hafiz) of Quran" in every community. These persons orally transmitted the Quran to the next generation. In fact, the Quran is the only book in human history that has been memorized by its believers and transmitted orally from generation to generation. No question has ever been raised about the reliability of the oral transmission of the Quran.

Written transmission by documentation

It was a regular practice of Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) that whenever he would receive a revelation of the Quran, he would immediately call one of his scribes and ask him to write it down. At the same time, he would also instruct the scribe the place where it should be written in the text of the Quran, e.g., he would tell the scribe the name of the chapter in which the verses were to be placed. He would then state the exact place of the revealed verses e.g., preceding or following such and such verses in the chapter. The scribe would then write the revealed verses of the Quran on a date bark or hide or the scapula bone of a camel, etc. He would then read them back to the Prophet (PBUH) and confirm the accuracy of documentation. The historians have recorded the names of more than 40 different scribes of the Quran. The most famous of these is Zaid bin Thabit.

An evident historical proof of the documentation of the Quran is the well-known report of Umar's acceptance of Islam. It is stated that one day Umar set out in rage with the intention of killing the Prophet (PBUH). Someone met him on the street and informed him that his sister and her husband had accepted Islam. Umar rushed to his sister's house and found them reading something. They hid the document from him. Umar then had no doubt that they were reading the Quran. He became violent and hit both of them. In this melee, his sister fell down and started bleeding. Umar was shocked and realized that he had hurt his sister. He then asked her to show him what they were reading. She told him that they were reading the Quran and that he was unclean to touch it. She asked him to take a bath and purify himself. Umar complied and, upon receiving the document, read it. It contained a few verses of chapter No. 20. Umar was so deeply moved by reading those verses that he rushed to the Prophet (PBUH) and embraced Islam. This incident shows that the Quran was available at Mecca in a written form even at the time when Muslims were very few in number and the Prophet (PBUH) had just started his mission.

There are a number of Ahadith which also state that written documents of the Quran were readily available in Medina as well. One of these states that when people came to Medina, they were provided with copies of the Quran so that they could read and learn about Islam by themselves. Another Hadith states that the blessed Prophet (PBUH) said:

Do not take the Quran on a journey with you lest it falls into the hands of an enemy (who might desecrate it). (Muslim)

Several books of Ahadith and histories have documented the details of the last pilgrimage of the Prophet (PBUH) when he delivered his famous “farewell address” to a gathering of about 124,000 Muslims. The blessed Prophet (PBUH) stated:

I am leaving behind with you two things; if you hold fast to them, you will never go astray; the book of Allah and the practice of his Prophet.

This statement also indicates that the Quran was available to the Prophet’s companions in the form of a book before the death of the Prophet (PBUH), lest the Prophet (PBUH) would not have used the word “Book of Allah”. The Quran also testifies that it was always available in the form of a written book.

(this is a) Book that We have sent down to you, full of blessings, so that they may ponder over its verses, and that of men of understanding may be reminded.

-Mujadila 38: 20

The very beginning of the Quran states, *Alif Lam Meem This is a Book in which there is no doubt* (Baqara 2: 1-2). Moreover, the Arabic word Kitab has been used for the Quran more than 80 times in the text of the Quran.

It is clear from this discussion that the entire Quran was preserved in a written form during the very lifetime of Prophet Mohammad (PBUH).

Role of the first Caliph Abu Bakr: 10- 13 AH (632-635 AD)

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) passed away in 10 AH. Abu Bakr became the first caliph (successor). During his

caliphate, the battle of Yamamah took place in 11 AH (633 CE). A number of Muslims including seventy "Huffaz" (those who memorized the entire Quran) died in this battle. Umar, the second Caliph then approached Abu Bakr and stressed the need for putting all the scattered documented portions of the Quran in the form of a single Book.

It should be noted that various portions of the Quran were not compiled in the form of a single bounded book during the life of the Prophet (PBUH). The reason being that the Prophet (PBUH) was not aware when the next verses would be revealed and where they would be placed in the text of the Quran. Because the revelation of the Quran was complete by the end of the Prophet's life, Abu Bakr instructed Zaid bin Thabit, the chief scribe of the Quran, to collect individual writings of all portions and to bind them together in the form of a single book.

Zaid made a general declaration that all those who had written portions of the Quran should bring them to him. He took special precautions in accepting the written portions of the Quran. When a person would bring a certain written portion of the Quran, he would compare it with other written portions. He would then announce that such a portion of written the Quran had been brought to him, e.g., he would announce that he had received a written portion of Chapter 9, verses 10-15. He would then invite a few other persons to recite the same verses from their memory, thereby cross-checking the reliability of the written portions of the Quran. Only until at least two different persons could corroborate a particular written portion of the Quran by their memory, he would accept it. In this way he put all verses of the Quran in a book form

according to the sequence in which they were initially documented by the Prophet (PBUH). This copy of the Quran was then entrusted to Hafsa, one of the wives of the Prophet (PBUH) and served as the official copy of written Quran.

Role of the third Caliph Uthman: 24-35 AH (644-655 CE)

By the time of the third Caliph Uthman, Islam had spread far and wide. Muslims at distant and different places started reading the Quran in different dialects. Serious differences then arose among Muslims from different places about the correct recitation of the Quran. Uthman then realized the need for bringing uniformity in the recitation of the Quran. He entrusted Zaid bin Thabit along with three others of the Prophet's scribes to rewrite the Quran in the dialect of the tribe of Quraish, the tribe in which Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was born. Zaid acquired the original copy of the Quran from Hafsa. Based on this Quran, he scribed seven copies of the Quran in the dialect of the tribe of Quraish. Later, Uthman sent one copy of this Quran to six different regional centers of the Muslim state and kept one copy in Medina. Along with each copy of the Quran, he also sent a professional "Qari" who could recite the Quran in the Quraishi dialect. This brought about a complete uniformity in reading and scribing of the Quran for the entire Muslim world. Two copies of the Quran written at that time are still available. One is at Tashkent in Russia and the other at Istanbul in Turkey. The fact that no change at all has occurred in the text of the Quran during the last fourteen centuries can be ascertained by comparing the present day copies of the Quran with these preserved copies of the Quran.

Ibn Hazm, the famous Muslim scholar, stated that there were at least 100,000 copies of the Quran produced during the period of Uthman. (refer to "The Quran & Gospels" by Dr. Laylah, published by El-Falah Foundation, Houston, 1998). The history also shows that countless copies of written Quran were freely available in the country. A famous battle called "Siffin" took place in the year 36 AH (657 CE) during the Caliphate of Ali. This was a non conclusive battle that went on for several days. One of the two battling parties then put the Quran on their spears, and the battle came to an end. This incident is reported by Muslim as well as non-Muslim historians and further indicate that countless copies of the Quran were freely available to Muslims.

Role of Tab'ies: (Generation following Prophet's Companions)

The Arabic script used in the seventh century, i.e. during the period of the Prophet (PBUH) and his companions consisted of very basic symbols which expressed the consonantal structure of the alphabets but did not facilitate clear reading and pronunciation of the words. Several Arabic alphabets were written by a single mark or line, such as ba, ta, tha and ya. Only an experienced person could read this script. Two important measures were introduced by "Tab'ies, which further ensured the uniform recitation of the Quran. Technically, these are known as "Tashkeel" and "Nuqat".

"Tashkeel" refers to the diacritical signs indicating the vowels. In Arabic they are known as fatha, kasra and dhamma and in Urdu as zabar, zeer and paish. Tab'ies added these signs to each alphabet in the text of the Quran prepared by Uthman. Thus even a non-Arab could

correctly read each word of the Quran, e.g. when alphabet b is joined with a, this could be distinctly read as ba, bai, or bu depending on the diacritical signs or "Tashkeel".

"Nuqat" refers to the placing of appropriate dots with each alphabet, e.g. ba was given one dot, and ya was given two dots at the bottom. Similarly ta and tha were given two and three dots respectively at the top. This remarkable work was done between 66-86 AH (685-705 CE). The addition of Tashkeel and Nuqat ensured an absolute uniformity in the documentation and recitation of the Quran even by those whose mother tongue is not Arabic.

It is evident from this discussion that the Quran was faithfully preserved and transmitted by its believers by two different and independent means, viz. oral and written. Whereas no change was needed in the oral transmission of the Quran, several improvements were made in the written transmission of the Quran. These improvements not only preserved its text but also brought an absolute and universal uniformity in the recitation of the Quran. The fact that no change has occurred in this transmission during the last fourteen centuries can be ascertained by looking at the two original written copies of the Quran still present in the world. At the same time this could also be ascertained by listening to the Quran by several Huffaz from different parts of the world. The Quran thus meets the factor of reliability through two independent means i.e. its transmission through memorization and through documentation. In fact, the Quran is the only divine book that meets the factor of reliability without the least shade of doubt.

Chapter 2

VALIDITY OF THE QURAN

Establishing the validity of the Quran calls for proving that the Quran is the word of Allah, the Exalted, and thus a divine book. Mankind does not have any tools and techniques to prove this on the basis of scientific research or technology. One can, however, deduce it by using commonsense, reason and logic. As such one can take several different approaches to establish the validity of the Quran.

The dictionaries define the word “miracle” as a divine act. No human being can initiate or perform a miracle. It is Allah, the Exalted, alone who has the power and the wisdom to perform a miracle. If it could be established that the text and the knowledge in the Quran could not, by any means, have come from a human being, this would constitute a miracle of the Quran and, in turn, establish the validity of the Quran as a divine revelation from Allah, the Exalted.

Most of the Quranic verses are very clear and explicit. There are also some verses that are not very explicit. They describe a concept or use a term that is not understood by a certain generation of mankind. Each Muslim generation accepted these verses as the mysteries of the Quran yet accepted them as divine revelations. As the human knowledge advanced to higher levels, each successive Muslim generation was able to understand a few of these concepts and terms, thereby changing the mysteries of the Quran to the facts of knowledge. This has been the most

evident and perpetual miracle of the Quran for the last fourteen centuries. Each Muslim generation has found a few verses of the Quran that corroborate with their specific level of science and technology. They were mystery for the previous generations but became facts for their generation.

Human society consists of persons of varied interest and diverse specialities. Since the Quran is a book of guidance for the entire mankind, it provides specific miracles for all sectors of human society. The Quran provides miracles for those interested only in the language and also for those interested in various domains of science such as chemistry, biology, astronomy, embryology, etc. At the same time it provides miracles for those interested in past human history or prophecies for the future or those interested in the mysteries of nature, etc. In fact, this has been the most unique and perpetual miracle of the Quran.

The following pages present a few evident miracles of the Quran. If a reader is able to discern the truth in any of these miracles, this would then establish the validity of Quran as the divine revelation of Allah, the Exalted. These miracles are presented in detail in two of my previous books; "Self Evident Miracles of the Quran" (published by CPH 103-43 Lefferts Blvd. Richmond Hill, NY 11419), and "160 Miracles and Mysteries of the Quran" (published by Al Minara Books, Houston, Tx, & Philadelphia, PA). For a detailed study of these miracles, one should refer to either of these books.

Miracles in the language of the Quran.

1. Both Muslims and non-Muslims agree that Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) could not read, write or even sign

his name. He never enjoyed the company of learned persons nor traveled abroad for the specific purpose of gaining knowledge. Yet, the language of the Quran is a linguistic perfection and a miracle in itself.

2. One of the most evident and outstanding miracles of the language of the Quran is the fact that it is still living. Not a single word, phrase or idiom of this Book has become obsolete or lost its original meaning. Every human language after a few decades or centuries undergoes a gradual phenomenon of change and assumes an entirely new shape or format. The Quran is still read and understood in a language in which it was revealed more than 1,400 years ago.

Miracles in Astronomy

3. Beginning of the universe as a gaseous mass
He (Allah) comprehended in His design the heaven when it was (only) a smoke.

Fussilat 41: 11

4. Origin of the universe as one entity

Have they not, those who disbelieve, seen that the heavens and earth were joined together (as one piece), then We (Allah) parted them.

Anbiya 21: 30

5. Movement of planets in orbits

(Allah is the) One who created the night and the day and the sun and the moon; all (celestial bodies) swim along, each in its (own) orbit.

Anbiya 21: 33

Miracles in Biology

6. Origin of life in water

Do not the unbelievers see that...We (Allah) created from water every living thing; will they not then believe.

Anbiya 21: 30

7. Existence of opposite genders in all species including plants

And it is He (Allah) who spread out the earth and set thereon mountains standing firm and (flowing) rivers and fruits of every kind He made in pairs, two and two.

Ra'ad 13:3

We (Allah) sent down rain from the sky and produced on the earth every kind of noble species in pairs.

Luqman 31: 10

Miracles in human beings

8. Presence of sensory nerves in skin

Those who reject Our signs, We (Allah) shall soon cast them into fire, as often as their skins are roasted through, We shall change it for them with fresh skin that they may taste the penalty (of Fire), For Allah is Exalted in Power, Wise.

Nisa 4: 56

9. Specificity of human finger-tips

Does man think that We (Allah) cannot assemble his bones? Nay, We are able to put together in perfect order (even) the very tips of his fingers. Qiyamah 75:3-4

Miracles in Chemistry

10. Presence of opposite radicals and ions

Glory be to Allah, who created in pairs all things that the earth produces.....

Yaseen 36:36

Miracles in Embryology

11. Origin of man by the sperm

Was he (man) not a mere sperm drop which is emitted:

Qiyamah 75: 37

12. Covering of embryo by three layers

He (Allah) creates you in the wombs of your mothers in stages one after the other in three veils of darkness. Such is Allah, your Lord and Cherisher.

Zumur 39: 6

13. Development of embryo in stages

He (Allah) makes you in the womb of your mother in stages one after another

Zumur 39: 6

It is He (Allah) who created you in divine stages.

Nahl 17: 1

Miracles in the mysteries of nature

14. Presence of ocean currents in sea water

Who has made the earth firm to live in, made rivers in its midst, set therein mountains and made a separating

barrier between two bodies of flowing water? Could there be a God besides Allah? Nay, most of them do not understand.

Namal 27: 61

He (Allah) has let loose the two oceans that they may meet together. Yet there stands between them a barrier which they do not transgress; So oh assembly of Jinn and Men! Which manifestations of your Lord's Power will you deny?

Rehman 55:19-21

Miracles in human history

15. Preservation of Pharaoh's body

We (Allah) will save your body, so that you may be a sign to succeeding generations; though there are many who give no heed to Our signs.

Younes 10: 92

It should be noted that the Bible also states that Pharaoh had drowned in the sea but does not give any information as to what subsequently became of his body. The Quran made the prediction that his body will be saved. It is now present in a Cairo museum.

16. City of Iram

Have you not seen how your Lord dealt with 'Aad of Iram (who were very tall) like lofty pillars, the like of which no nation was created in the lands of the world.

Fajr 89:6-8

The National Geographic magazine, December 1978, gave a detailed account of the recent discovery of this city. The Bible does not give any description of the people of Iram.

Miracles in challenges

17. Find a contradiction in the Quran

Do they (the unbelievers) not reflect upon the Quran. If it had been from (someone) other than Allah, they would surely have found therein much contradictions.

Nisa 4:8

18. Produce a similar Quran

Say if whole of mankind and Jinn gathered to produce the like of this Quran, they could not produce the like of it, even if they backed up each other with help and support.

Bani Israel 17: 88

19. Make a chapter like the one in the Quran

Do they say: he (Mohammad) forged it? say: Bring then a chapter like unto it, and call (to your aid) anyone besides, if you speak the truth.

Younes 10: 37-38

20. Produce ten chapters like those in the Quran

Or they say: He (Mohammad) forged it; Say: Bring you then (at least) ten chapters like unto it, and call (to your aid) whomever you can besides Allah, if you speak the truth.

Hood 11: 13

21. Produce a recital like that of the Quran

Do they say: he (Mohammad) fabricated (the Quran), nay, they have no faith, let them then produce a recital like unto it, if they speak the truth.

Toor 52: 33-34

One should realize that the Quran was revealed more than fourteen hundred years ago. Human mind at that time could not even imagine such miracles, mysteries and challenges. Had Mohammad (PBUH) given the Quran out of his wild imagination, at least a few of its verses would have been wrong. The fact is that not a single verse of the Quran contradicts a single factual discovery of science. Every coming generation of mankind finds more corroboration of scientific knowledge with the text of the Quran. Who besides Allah, the All Wise and the All Knowing, could have such absolute knowledge. Moreover, all the challenges of the Quran are still valid even for those who have doubts about the divine nature of the Quran.

If a reader accepts even one of the above miracles or challenges, this would establish the validity of the Quran as the divine revelation from Allah, the Exalted.

Besides these miracles and mysteries, the Quran has a few unique features not shared by any other Divine book. These features further add to the validity of the Quran as the last and final Divine Revelation from Allah, the Exalted. Following are a few of these features.

1. The original texts of all former divine books are lost and only the translations of their versions exist today. The Quran is the only book that exists in its original language. No question has ever been raised about the reliability of the original words of the Quran.
2. Scholars of all different faiths agree that all previous divine books have been rewritten by men. On the other hand, even the non-Muslim scholars agree that no

change has ever occurred in the text of the Quran. Not to speak of words, in fact no change has occurred even in the punctuation marks of the individual alphabets.

3. If one takes into consideration the historical facts, no previous divine book can be traced back to its original prophet. Moreover, history does not have any record of their documentation and transmission through generations. The evidence that the Quran can be traced back to Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) is so voluminous, convincing and strong that even the critics of Islam cannot cast doubt over it. History has also preserved the details of the revelation and documentation of individual sections of the Quran. The Quran was revealed to Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) during a period of 23 years. All commentaries of the Quran give the necessary details of the time and place where each and every individual section of the Quran was revealed. This is one of the most unique and outstanding features of the Quran.
4. All former divine books were sent in the languages that are now dead or obsolete. Hardly any nation or community speaks these languages today. Moreover, even if these books were present in their original languages, a common man could not read and understand them. The Quran was revealed in Arabic language. It is still a living and vibrant language. Countless people, communities and nations speak and understand it. It is also being taught in countless schools, colleges and universities. Every man can learn it and then read and understand the Divine Guidance in its original language.

5. The Quran is the only divine book that addresses mankind. Not a single section of it refers to a group of people or to a certain geographical area. All previous divine books, on the other hand, are addressed to a specific group of people. None of them addresses mankind. Moreover, they have numerous commandments that refer to a particular tribe, geographical area or a period in history. The commandments of the Quran are universal, free of all barriers of time and space.
6. Words of Allah, the Exalted, are always pure. They contain the highest principles of morality and ethics. Man has contaminated the previous divine books to the extent that he has added obscenity and even incest to the words of God. One can find such immoral stories and descriptions in all previous divine books, e.g. the story of Prophet Lot in the Bible that he got drunk and had sex with two of his daughters (See: Genesis 19: 30-36). Allah, the Exalted, kept the Quran free from all forms of obscenity. The Quran does not contain even a trace of immoral or obscene description.
7. One of the most unique features of the Quran is that it is the only divine book that can be and has been memorized by men. Countless people, both men and women, throughout human history have memorized the whole Quran. It should be noted that when a person memorizes the Quran, he not only memorizes each and every word but also the punctuation marks and diacritical signs associated with each individual alphabet of the Quran. It should also be noted that 88% of the total Muslim population is non-Arab, who do not understand the Arabic language. Yet, it is another

miracle that even those who do not understand the Arabic language, do memorize the whole of the Quran with the correct pronunciation.

Allah, the Exalted put such self evident and unique features in the Quran so that mankind could ponder over it, and accept it as the last and final Divine Revelation from the Almighty Creator.

Chapter 3

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY OF THE QURAN

Abridged and modified version of "Introduction to the Quran"
by A.A. Maudoodi

Following pages present two basic discussions. Firstly, they acquaint the reader with those specific features that are unique to the Quran. The reader should acknowledge and accept these unique features. Unless the reader accepts these specific features of the Quran, he may not get any benefit just by reciting its verses. Moreover, if he is not aware of these features, they may cause a hindrance towards the understanding of the Quran. Secondly, these pages try to answer a few questions that most readers come across while going through the Quran.

A Unique Book

Before the reader begins the study of the Quran, he must bear in mind that this is a unique book, different from all other books present in the world. Unlike other books, the Quran does not contain information, ideas or arguments about specific themes arranged in a conventional sequence or style. A stranger to the Quran does not readily find the information in a usually accepted form. He does not find the Quran divided into distinct chapters, each dealing with one topic. He also does not find the information arranged into an apparent sequence, such as introduction, discussion and conclusion. On the contrary, he finds that it deals with various seemingly unrelated topics at the same time. It gives moral instructions, lays down laws, invites

mankind to monotheism, admonishes the disbelievers and gives glad tidings to the believers. All of these are blended in a very impressive and eloquent style of language. Moreover, he notices that the same subject is often repeated in more than one ways and one theme follows another without any apparent connection. Often a new topic crops up in the middle of another theme without any apparent separation. The diction of the speaker and of those being spoken to changes without any obvious notice. There is no sign of sections, chapters, title or sub-headings anywhere in the whole text of the Quran. Moreover, every description is unique in its own sense. Historical events are presented but not as in a history book. Problems of philosophy and metaphysics are treated in a manner different from a text book on the subject. Man and universe are mentioned in a language different from that of the texts of natural science. Likewise, the Quran follows its own method of solving cultural, political, social and economic problems. It deals with principles of law and constitution in a manner quite different from that of jurists or sociologists. Most of all, morality is taught in a way that has no parallel in human literature. These are just a few of the things, unique to the Quran.

A reader who is not well acquainted with these features is baffled and puzzled at his first encounter with the Quran. He begins to feel that the Quran is a book without any order or that it deals with miscellaneous subjects in an incoherent manner. It does not, like other books, state at the beginning the subject it deals with and the object it intends to achieve. He finds that often a specific statement is given without any reference to its background. Even those verses which are very plain and clear often appear to be irrelevant in the context of where they occur.

Sometimes he is so lost that he starts raising endless questions and objections against the Quran. It is, therefore, very important for a reader to understand that the first step towards the understanding of the Quran is to accept it as a unique book, the parallel of which does not exist in any human library. The Quran has its own distinctive features. A reader may receive benefit from the Quran only when he understands and accepts that he is going to study a book of its own kind; that its literary style is quite different from that of the other books, that its theme is unique and that it does not follow the conventional style in its text.

Once the reader accepts these distinctive features of the Quran, only then should he try to understand the basic nature of this book; its central theme and its main objective. The reader should also be well acquainted with its unique literary style, the terms it uses and the approach it takes to explain a subject. He should also be acquainted with the background and the circumstances under which a certain verse or passage was revealed. Most of all, this book will benefit a reader only when he studies it without any preconceived notions and accepts¹ all of its distinctive and unique features.

The reader of the Quran should also realize that each and every book in the world deals with a certain domain of knowledge. The Quran, on the other hand, is the only book on the surface of the earth that primarily deals with faith and not knowledge. A book of faith in no way can be compared with that of knowledge.

Nature of the Book: A Divine Guidance

First and foremost, the reader should understand the basic nature of the book. Whether one believes it to be a divine book or not, one will have to consider, at the starting point, the claim that is put forward by the book itself, and by the person who delivered the book, namely Mohammad (Peace and Blessings be Upon Him). Both claim that it is a Divine Book, a revelation from Allah, the Exalted. Whether a person accepts or rejects this claim, one has to acknowledge that mankind needs a divine guidance to live a happy and peaceful life in this world.

Allah created man with basic faculties of learning, speaking, understanding, discerning right from wrong and good from evil. Allah also granted him faculties to acquire knowledge that may help him to live a peaceful and productive life. Moreover, Allah gave him the freedom of will, choice and action. After giving these freedoms in life, Allah took upon Himself to send his Divine Guidance to him. At the same time, Allah warned him clearly and precisely that He gave him the freedom of will as a test of his worldly life. If he chooses to submit to the will of Allah, he will be successful in this world and the world hereafter and if he chooses to reject the will of Allah, he will be a failure in this world and the world hereafter.

Allah, in His divine plan, started sending His messengers to mankind with His divine guidance. Adam (peace be upon him), the first person sent to this world, was also the first messenger of Allah and was given the first Divine Guidance. Countless Messengers were then sent to different parts of the world at different times. Though their detailed teachings differed due to the specific needs

of the society, each one of them brought the same basic message of Islam: belief in the Oneness of Allah and surrender to His Will. As human society went through a gradual evolution, the Divine Guidance also became more and more comprehensive.

Allah then sent Mohammad, (PBUH), as His Last Messenger to fulfill the same mission that was first given to Adam (peace be upon him) and to all the messengers who followed him. The teachings of all the messengers were then put together and modified to meet the universal needs of the mankind. This combination of all previous guidance to mankind is the Quran, the final and the eternal Guidance of Allah, the Most Gracious. The Quran states:

It was not (possible) for this Quran to be produced by someone other than Allah, for (it is) a confirmation of what was (revealed) before it, and it is a detailed description of the (former) Scriptures, about which there is no doubt from the Lord of the Worlds. Younes 10: 37

Central Theme

Now that we know the Divine nature of the Quran, it is easy to understand the subject it deals with, its central theme and its aim and objective. The subject it deals with is man. It explains those principles that will lead him to his success and warns against those that may end up in failure. The central theme that runs throughout the Quran is the Divine Guidance that constantly invites mankind to follow the path of the messengers. It points out that all other paths invented by man are false and will lead to failure in this world and the world hereafter. Consequently, the basic aim and the objective of the

Quran is to invite man to the right path, help him to live a happy and peaceful life in this world and to receive Allah's eternal blessings in the world hereafter.

If the reader keeps these three basic things in mind, he will find that in this Book there is no inconsistency in style, no gaps in the continuity of a subject and no lack of interconnection between various chapters and verses. As a matter of fact, this Book is not irrelevant anywhere with regard to its subject, its theme and its aim and objective. Various topics and the verses therein are intimately connected to its central theme. They may be compared to different pearls of the same necklace where each pearl, though different, adds to the beauty of the necklace. The Quran maintains its basic theme and its objective whether it is relating the story of the creation of heavens and earth, the creation of man, the mysteries of nature or the facts of history. As the objective of the Quran is to guide man and not to teach a definite domain of knowledge, it does not concern itself with the necessary details of nature, science, history or philosophy. Its main focus is always man. It invites man to the basic theme; the Divine Guidance. It returns to its central theme again and again. It keeps explaining this truth in so many different forms, styles and rhetoric. It keeps on removing all human confusion so that man may shape up his life according to the Divine Will. When the Quran is studied in this light, the whole of it is closely interconnected with its theme and objective that runs throughout the text of the Book. One will not find any irrelevance and gaps either in its basic message or its style.

Background

One cannot fully understand and appreciate many topics discussed in the Quran unless one is acquainted with the background of their revelations. One should know the social and historical conditions and antecedents associated with a certain section or topic. For, the Quran was not revealed as a complete book at one time. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) completed his mission during a period of 23 years; the first 13 years in Mecca and the last 10 years in Medina. The Quran was revealed piecemeal during a period of 23 years according to the conditions and the needs of the mission of the Prophet (PBUH) and those of the Muslim Ummah. It is a unique feature of the Quran that historians and commentators of the Quran have preserved the entire history of its revelations. They have coined a specific term for it known as "Shawn-e-Nuzool", meaning the reason for revelation. The more a reader is acquainted with this factor, the more he can understand and appreciate the Quran.

Chapters revealed in Mecca

In Mecca, the Prophet (PBUH) was surrounded by unbelievers. The primary people addressed in early revelations were these unbelievers. The Quran invited them to the basic articles of Islamic faith, viz. unity of Allah, Prophethood of Mohammad (PBUH) and accountability of the Day of Judgment. The entire Meccan verses of the Quran revolve around these three topics. It also invites the unbelievers to adopt the basic principles of morality and simultaneously refutes their belief and the pagan customs of life.

These early revelations consist of short and concise sentences in a very eloquent and effective language. Literary style was so eloquent and poetic that it touched the hearts of the listeners and readers. Though universal truths were stated in them, they were given a local color from their environment, traditions and history. The tone and style of these verses is very objective. It is based on reason and logic. It also invites them to the various signs of Allah in the creation of nature and in their own life and to accept the truth of the Quran based on reason, common-sense and logic. It should be noted that the Prophet (PBUH) continued his mission in Mecca but had little success. Hence the tone of the late Meccan revelations changed to that of challenge and warning. The later verses also declare severe punishment for the unbelievers. At the same time, they promise countless rewards for the believers. Hence these verses give more detailed descriptions of the punishments in Hell and the blessings in Paradise.

As a result of the Prophet's mission, Muslims were growing in large numbers with firm belief in their new faith. A good section of the Meccan revelations reinforce their faith and prepared them for further tests and challenges in life.

Chapters revealed in Medina

The society in Medina was more complex than that at Mecca. Firstly, it had an organized Muslim nation and a Muslim state. Secondly, it also included Christians and Jews, not the polytheists as in Mecca. Thirdly, a number of unbelievers entered the fold of Islam as hypocrites. Hence the revelations in Medina addressed these three

different sections of the society. They gave severe warnings to Christians and Jews, invited them to the basic truth in their own Scriptures and to accept Mohammad (PBUH) as the last Prophet of Allah. Most of these verses were addressed to the Muslims and gave them the necessary details for their new role and responsibility as the vicegerent of Allah.

Muslims were given guidelines of relations they should have with Christians and Jews, their allies and their enemies. Some revelations gave guidelines for leading their personal lives, warned them against failure and also urged them to sacrifice their lives and properties for the cause of Allah. Others taught them moral lessons in victory and defeat, adversity and prosperity, war and peace. At the same time, some revelations gave them laws to implement in their personal and social life. More emphasis in these revelations was laid on their social obligations and duties as the vicegerent of Allah.

Style

It is clear from the above discussion that the revelations of the Quran started a new Muslim Ummah (community). This continued for 13 years in Mecca leading to the establishment of an Islamic state in Medina. Early portions of the Quran were revealed according to the need of various phases of this growing community. Later verses focussed on the growing needs of the Islamic state. Needless to say that such a vibrant book cannot have the format, style, and language which is followed in a worldly book. Each and every word in the Quran reflects the change in the conditions of the Muslim Ummah and the

Islamic state. Hence the style, format and language of the Quran also changes accordingly.

It should also be noted that various portions of the Quran were not meant to be published in the form of hand-outs or pamphlets. Rather, they were to be delivered like a sermon or lecture. Each portion of lecture was related to a certain phase of the Islamic movement. Hence these lectures also cannot be compared with a lecture of a professor on a topic. Their style is naturally different and more vibrant. Moreover, the Prophet (PBUH) was entrusted with a comprehensive mission. He had to appeal both to human emotions and intellect. He had to deal with people of different mental levels. He also had to address the varying needs of the Islamic movement. Such a person had to do all that was required to meet the varying needs of his followers and his mission. He had to inculcate his message into the minds and souls of his followers. He had to educate and train them, imbue them with spirit and courage and prepare them to face the opposing forces. At the same time, he had to change their whole life --- their mind, heart, attitude, priorities, and their daily conduct. He had to prepare them to struggle, live and die for the love of Allah. It is, therefore, both incorrect and misleading to seek the style of a formal book or that of a college lecture in the discourse of the Quran. The style and the language of the Quran goes hand in hand with the various phases of the Islamic movement and also with the mission of Prophet Mohammad (PBUH).

This in turn explains again why the same thing in Quran is often repeated over and over again. A specific mission or the stage of a movement demands that only those things be mentioned that are relevant to the need and the mission.

Thus the Quran keeps repeating the same message in different tones and styles. As long as there is a need to achieve a mission or the movement stays at a certain stage, whether for weeks or months, the Quran keeps repeating the same message over and again. It is, however, a beauty of the Quran that these repetitions do not create the monotony of style or language. Each and every description of the Quran is unique, beautiful, impressive and elegant.

In addition, all chapters of the Quran contain reference to its basic theme, i.e. unity of Allah, mission of Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) and accountability on the day of Judgment. At the same time, all of them teach piety, fortitude, endurance, faith and trust in Allah. These basic virtues could not be neglected at any stage. If any of these basic virtues was weakened at any stage, the Islamic movement could not have progressed in its true spirit. This further accounts for the repeated descriptions of these virtues at every stage of the revelation of the Quran.

Order

The Quran was not arranged and documented in the sequence of its revelation. A few unbelievers have raised objections to this arrangement. They are of the opinion that, after the Prophet's demise, some of his companions arranged it without any discernible order and reason, merely putting the longer chapters first and the shorter ones towards the end of the Quran. Allah alone knows the wisdom of the arrangement of His Book. Nevertheless, a little pondering over the difference between the Meccan and Medinite chapters may help us to understand a part of this wisdom.

Although the Quran was to be the guidance for all times, it had to be revealed piecemeal according to two factors: first, varying needs of the mission of the Prophet (PBUH), and second, the growing needs of the Muslim Ummah. It is obvious that the sequence of revelations of the Quran which reflected the above two factors could, in no way, be the same for its documentation after the completion of its revelation. Another order, suited to changed conditions, was needed. In the early stages of revelation, the Quran addressed people who were totally ignorant of Islam. Hence it had to teach them the basic articles of faith. The later revelations were primarily addressed to the believers. These verses were focussed on their basic duties, personal and social obligations and the laws to be implemented in the Muslim Ummah. Obviously the order of the complete book had to be different from its chronological order. A new order was needed to meet the eternal needs of Muslim Ummah and mankind at large. First and foremost, the Quran had to address its believers. It had to prepare them to carry its message to others. It also had to warn them of the evils that appeared among the followers of previous books and former prophets. It is for this reason that the longer chapters of the Quran, e.g. Baqara and similar Medinite chapters, which deal with these topics, had to be placed in the beginning of the Quran.

In this connection, another factor should also be kept in view. It does not suit the purpose of the Quran that all chapters dealing with similar topics should be grouped together. The Quran deals with human life. One cannot divide it into discrete compartments. All factors of life are always interconnected. The order and arrangement of the Quran also reflect this basic human need. It is for this

reason that the Meccan verses are mixed with the Medinite verses and vice-versa, also the chapters revealed at the early stage of Muslim Ummah come between those revealed in the later stages. In this way the entire picture of the Muslim Ummah remains in front of the reader. This could be another reason for the present order of the Quran.

Most of all, it should be noted that the order and arrangement of the Quran is Divine. Whenever a verse was revealed, the Prophet (PBUH) would call a scribe and instruct him to write down the verses. He would then describe the position of the revealed verses by stating the chapter where to document it. He would be very specific and instruct the scribe to write the revealed verse after such and such verse in such and such chapter. The fact is that the order of chapters of the Quran and the sequence of verses in each chapter were personally arranged by Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) under the guidance of the one who revealed it; i.e. Allah, the Exalted. It is a historical fact that the Prophet (PBUH) and his companions always recited and documented the Quran in the same order that we have today. One does not have any basis to say that the present order of the Quran was done by the companions of the Prophet (PBUH)

Universality

The Quran claims to provide guidance for the whole mankind. A casual reader may feel that it is mainly addressed to Arabs who lived at the time of its revelation. Though, it also addresses other people and mankind in general, it often discusses those things which appeal to the Arabs, things which were linked to their environment, history and custom. He may then feel that the Quran was

really meant for the reform of the Arabs at the time of its revelation and not as guidance for mankind for all ages.

A reader can resolve this doubt by himself. He should take a pencil and underline those sections which give rise to his doubt. He should jot down those conditions, things and incidents that refer exclusively to Arabs. He will be amazed to see that their number as compared to the total text of the Quran is very small. He should also note down those moral principles, personal attributes, social obligations and legal codes that refer to the Arabs. He will be amazed to find no such section in the Quran. He should also note the approach the Quran follows for its basic theme. He will acknowledge that it does not mention the Arabs but deals with the entire mankind.

One should note that every ideology, social system and religion has to make reference to specific cases and visible examples. None of them can teach in abstract terms and attract human attention. It is simply impossible to build a model of life merely on abstract forms. The only proper method is to start a movement in the country of its origin and put its abstract ideas into a living model. Whatever the movement preaches should be put to practice in its own country. This will naturally attract other nations to study this model and implement it in their own lands. It was for this simple reason that the first model Islamic state was established in Arabian Peninsula. History bears testimony to the fact that Islam today is the religion of more than a billion people all over the globe.

What truly distinguishes a national from an international, a temporary from a permanent system is evident from the teachings of the Quran? A national system aims to establish its own superiority at the expense of the life, property and welfare of others. It presents principles,

theories and laws which, by their very nature, cannot be enforced on other people. On the contrary, an international system grants equal rights to all human beings. It also presents an ideology that is universally applicable. Moreover, the principles and theories of a temporary system keep on changing with time whereas no change occurs in the teachings of a permanent system. From all of these perspectives, the Quran is a universal book free from all barriers of space and time.

All that has been presented above refers only to the domain of knowledge, reason and intellect of the reader. No doubt, if a reader follows these instructions, he may receive some benefit from the recitation of the Quran. One should, however, remember that the Quran is basically a book of faith. Whereas, one can increase his knowledge by efforts and struggle, one cannot increase his faith by efforts and struggle alone. Faith is a gift of Allah. He blesses faith only to those who make a sincere effort to receive it. The ultimate benefit from the Quran will come to a reader when he makes a pure and sincere effort to receive Allah's Blessings and Bounties. He should approach the Quran with the love, respect and devotion that is due to a Divine Revelation. He should then open the Book with a sincere desire and also prayer that Allah opens his heart and blesses it with faith in His Wisdom, Mercy and Love. Allah alone has the key to the hearts of the people. Unless a reader makes a sincere effort, Allah will not open his heart. The ultimate blessings of the Quran will come only to those whose hearts are open to receive its blessings and bounties.

Chapter 4

WAY TO THE QURAN

Following is an abridged and modified version of the book "Way to the Quran" by Khurram Murad

As you come to the Quran, you come to a new world, a world of boundless treasures of knowledge, wisdom, imagination, inspiration and illumination. It is beyond human power to describe or even to comprehend the ultimate wisdom and blessing of the Quran. It is Allah's ultimate blessings to the mankind. It is the fulfillment of His promise to Adam (peace be upon him) and his descendents. Allah, the Exalted, states:

There shall come to you Guidance from Me, and whoever follows My Guidance, no fear shall be on them, neither shall they grieve.

Baqara 2:38

It is a shield that will protect you from all forces of evils and temptations. It is the light that will lead you to success and salvation in this world and the world Hereafter. It is your constant sanctuary that will give you peace and tranquility in the day to day struggle of your life. Most of all, it is the only way that will bring you closer to your Creator. It tells you all that you should know about your Creator, His specific and unique attributes, His Exalted Power, and His Divine Wisdom. It also tells you how He rules this universe, how He relates Himself to you and how you should relate to him. At the same time, it also tells you how you should relate to other fellow men and every other thing in His kingdom. In fact, it is the most

comprehensive source for all of your physical, moral and spiritual needs.

All of these blessings and bounties of the Quran are like a hidden treasure. The Quran opens the doors of its treasures only to those who approach it with a depth of devotion, sincerity of intention and purity of purpose that befits its majesty and glory. Each and every word in the Quran is the direct revelation from Allah, the Exalted. Only those, who give due respect and reverence to its Divine Majesty are privileged to gather its treasure. The Quran will not offer even an atom's worth of its treasure to the one who opens it just for recitation or just for gaining knowledge. Only those are privileged to gather its treasures who are prepared to devote themselves completely to its guidance and try their utmost to follow and obey its commandments. What a tragic misfortune it would be if you come to the Quran and went away empty handed, soul untouched, heart unmoved, life unchanged. The blessings of the Quran are limitless but the measure of your fill depends entirely upon your intention and effort. So, at the very outset, make yourself deeply aware of what the Quran means to you and what it demands of you. Make a solemn determination to recite it with the respect it deserves as the word of the All-Mighty Allah, a desire to obey its commandments and a will to change your life accordingly. The Quran will then open its boundless and endless treasures to you.

BASIC PREREQUISITES:

A. Attitude of heart and mind

1. Faith and conviction

Come to the Quran with a deep and firm faith that it is the revealed word of Allah, the Exalted. You should always remain conscious that each word that you are reading has been directly sent by Allah, the Exalted, as a personal message to you. This constant awareness is vital to develop the right attitude to benefit from the blessings and wisdom of the Quran. Think of the majesty, glory and power of Allah, the Exalted. You will then feel an awe and devotion as you recite His words.

2. Purpose of recitation

Recite the Quran with no purpose other than to come closer to your Lord and to seek His guidance and His pleasure. You should seek guidance from the Quran for each and every step of your life. It is the word of Allah, the Exalted. It requires a special level of respect and devotion as the symbol of Allah's Glory and Majesty. One who holds the Quran in his hands, yet goes to other sources for his guidance and inspiration is surely running after mirages.

3. Accepting the truth

Accept without the slightest hesitation, skepticism and doubt every piece of knowledge in the Quran. It is the absolute truth from Allah, the Exalted, the All-Wise. You have every right to question, enquire, reflect and ponder what it contains; but what you cannot comprehend is not necessarily unreasonable. The

Quran contains the absolute and the ultimate knowledge that is divine. A human mind can never completely comprehend its vastness, wisdom and mysteries. You have the right to deny that it is the word of Allah, the Exalted. But once you have accepted its Divine nature, you have no basis whatsoever to doubt even a single word of it. There must be a total surrender to all that the Quran states. Your opinion, belief, notions, emotions, whims and caprices should not be allowed to override any part of it.

4. Willingness to change

Have the willingness and determination to change and mold your attitude, behavior and conduct in accordance with the teachings of the Quran. Mere intellectual exercise will never bring you anywhere close to the treasures of the Quran. As you go through the words of the Quran, start practicing it in your day to day life. The Quran will then start melting into your heart and soul.

5. Seeking refuge with Allah

Remain aware that, as you embark upon reciting the Quran, Satan will make greater efforts to deprive you of its blessings. He may pollute your intention, create doubts in your mind, make you unmindful of its Majesty and Glory, create barriers between your soul and the words of Allah and tempt you away from obeying its commandments. It is for this reason that Allah states in the Quran:

When you recite the Quran, seek refuge with Allah from Satan the rejected.

Nahl 16:98

Begin the recitation of the Quran by saying; I seek refuge with Allah from Satan the rejected. Moreover, if a negative thought creeps into your mind during its recitation, go back to this supplication and restart its recitation.

6. Allah's infinite Mercy

Realize that it is Allah's mercy that can help you to receive the ultimate blessings from the Quran. Your intention and efforts are the basic means, but the rewards and blessings of the Quran will come to you through Allah's mercy. So approach the Quran with humility and reverence; with a sense of utter dependence upon Allah's mercy. Put your trust in His Mercy and seek His Blessings at each and every step of your recitation.

7. Constant praise and gratitude

Pulsate yourself constantly with intense praise and gratitude to Allah, the Exalted, for having blessed you with His Guidance and also for having guided you to its reading and study. The more you are thankful to Allah, the Exalted, the more He will bless you from His Bounties. Open your heart and soul and pray as you have been taught in the Quran;

Our Lord let not our heart swerve (from Your Guidance), after you have guided us, and bestow upon us your grace; indeed you alone are the bestower.

Al-e-Imran 3:8

B. Presence of heart

While you are reciting the Quran, you should try your best that your heart remains attached to the Quran. Remember

and realize that the Quran was revealed to the "heart" of the Prophet (PBUH). Allah, the Exalted states:

Truly, this (Quran) is a revelation from the Lord of the worlds; which the trustworthy (angel Gabriel) has brought down upon your heart, that you may be (one) of the Warner.
Shu'ra 26: 192-94

The Quran will enter into your life only when you open your heart to it. You should pour all of your inner emotions, aspirations, reverence, humility and devotion to the words of the Quran. Only then you will have the capacity to receive the treasures of the Quran. The following few rules may increase the devotion of your heart to the Quran.

8. Presence of Allah

The Quran states: *Whatever portion you may be reciting from the Quran, and whatever deed you may be doing, we are witnessing thereof when you are engrossed therein.*

Nahl 16: 61

It also states: *He (Allah) is with you wherever you may be*

Hadeed 57: 4

Keep your heart and consciousness alive to this reality that you are in the very presence of Allah, the Exalted, and that He is witnessing and watching you constantly.

9. Listening to the Quran from Allah, the Exalted

Feel as a part of your efforts to remain in the presence of Allah, the Exalted, as if you are listening to the words of the Quran from Allah Himself. To start with, feel as if you

are listening to the Quran from the blessed tongue of the Prophet (PBUH). Then feel as if it is coming to you from angel Gabriel and lastly as if it is coming to you directly from Allah, the Exalted.

10. Direct address of the Quran

Consider that you, individually and personally, are in the direct address of the Quran. Let all the intermediaries recede and disappear between you and Allah, the Exalted. Open your heart and soul. Let each and every word be a direct communication from Allah, the Exalted, to you. The very thought of this direct communication will keep your heart seized by what you are reciting.

11. Posture and position

Make your outward posture reflect your inner humility, devotion and submission to Allah, the Exalted. There should be a difference in your posture and position while reading a worldly book, a newspaper and the words of Allah, the Exalted. Find a special place to sit down, a place away from distractions. Make mental and physical preparations before you start your recitation. It is most recommended that you make ablution before touching the book of Allah.

12. Purification of self and surroundings

Purify yourself and your surroundings as much as possible. The Quran states:

That is indeed an honorable recitation; in a book well guarded; which none can touch but the purified.

Waqia 56: 77-79

You should therefore try to have the utmost purity. Your body, your dress and also the place where you recite should be clean. You should also try to have the purity and sincerity of your intentions. At the same time, the purity of soul is also equally important. You should try to stay away from sins as much as possible. If you happen to commit some sins, then first ask Allah's forgiveness and then open the Quran. Also be careful that while reciting the Quran, you are not wearing something that is Haram (unlawful) and your stomach does not have something that is Haram. The purer you are, the more your heart will open to the blessings of the Quran.

C. Understanding and Reflection

It is vital that you should try to understand what Allah, the Exalted, is saying to you. At the same time, you should reflect and ponder over what you recite. If you read the Quran without understanding it, you may receive a few blessings. This would not, in the least, fulfill the purpose for which it has been sent to you. It has come to vitalize you, mold you and lead you to a new phase of life. It is full of exhortations asking you as to why you do not hear, think or use reason and do not ponder. It states: *When they are reminded of the verses of their Lord, they fall not dead and blind thereat.* Furqan 25: 73

It also states: *Then do they not ponder over the Quran, or are there locks on their hearts.* Mohammad 47: 24

The following guidelines may help you to achieve these objectives.

13. Understand and reflect over the Quran as if it was being revealed to you today. Remember that each word of the Quran is as living and relevant today as it was on the day it was first revealed. As such, you should try to relate and apply it to your daily life. Do not take any verse of the Quran as merely a story or the knowledge of the past.

14. Read the entire Quran from the beginning to the end. This will give you an overall idea of the Book. Concentrate on its major issues like its theme, style and message. If you are reading its translation, it is recommended that you study more than one translations and read them simultaneously. Remember, every translation has some strong and some weak points.

15. Try to learn at least as much Arabic as will enable you to understand the basic meaning and message of the Quran. It may appear difficult but every effort will bring countless blessings from Allah, the Exalted.

16. Ponder and reflect on that portion of the Quran which you read. This requires reciting the Quran slowly and even repeatedly. You may also read the same verses from different translations and commentaries at different times. It is stated that the Prophet (PBUH) and his companions would often spend the whole night just repeating the same verse. The Quran has an endless ocean of inspiration, wisdom and blessings. Each recitation of the Quran with the proper attitude of the heart and the mind will lead you to a higher level of inspiration and wisdom.

17. Find out a commentary of the Quran according to your level of knowledge, and your basic need. All commentaries of the Quran give different levels of

knowledge and focus on a certain basic theme; e.g., one will emphasize the language of the Quran, other may focus on the history of its revelation, and yet another may focus on derivation of Islamic laws (Fiqh) etc. Seek help from a knowledgeable person to recommend a commentary of Quran for you. This will further help you to appreciate the meaning and the wisdom of each and every word of the Quran.

D. Internal participation

As stated above, the Quran was initially sent down to the "heart" or the inner self of Prophet Mohammad (PBUH). You will, therefore, reap its full blessings when you are able to involve your innerself in your recitation. This may not be difficult if you are mindful that you are reading the exact words from your Creator, in His very presence. The Quran states:

We (Allah) are nearer to him than his jugular vein.

Qaf 50: 16

The more you will feel close to Allah, the Exalted, the more you will have an internal participation of yourself with the Quran. The following guidelines may help you achieve this level of recitation.

18. Receiving the Quran into Your Heart

Remind yourself of what the Quran states of those who receive it with their hearts and how the Prophet (PBUH) and his companions immersed their innerself in its recitation. The Quran states:

When they hear what has been sent down to the Messenger, you see their eyes overflow with tears;

because of the truth they have recognized; they cry out, Our Lord! We believe; so do write down us among the witnesses (of this truth).

Maida 5: 83

It also states: *When His verses are recited unto them, they increase their faith.*

Anfal 8: 2

You may or may not achieve this level of inner participation. Nevertheless, you should be aware of the level you desire to achieve.

19. Desire for a personal change

You have already accepted the Quran as a Guidance from Allah, the Exalted. You should now try to make it relevant to your personal life. Consider that each message is a personal invitation for you to change your life, your criterion of right and wrong, your scales of hopes and fear, and your only path to pursue in life. Closer you will bring your day to day life to the Quran, the more you will receive the blessings of the Quran.

20. Sincere response

Your heart should now come alive and vibrate to various notes and themes present in the Quran. Let your heart flow with the theme of the Quran. As the Quran describes the mercy of Allah, His wrath, His warnings, His glad tidings, etc, your heart should reflect similar state of emotions and inspirations. Each theme of the Quran should create a similar wavelength of emotions and inspirations in your heart and soul.

21. Sincere expression

Your tongue should express the various states of your heart. That is how the Prophet (PBUH) and his

companions used to recite the Quran. He would say "glory be to Allah" after reciting verses describing the majesty and power of Allah; He would say "thanks be to Allah", after reciting the verses describing the bounties of Allah. He sought forgiveness and refuge with Allah, the Exalted, and asked for His favors and bounties after reading similar verses. Hence each theme of the Quran, should create an internal state of heart and this should also find an expression in your tongue.

E. Living by the Quran

22. The basic purpose of the Quran is to guide you to the path of Allah, the Exalted, and to bring your life into His submission. As you recite the Quran you should also try to live by what it enjoins upon you and what it forbids for you. If you do not follow what it enjoins and forbids, you will not get even close to the blessings of the Quran. In fact, one who recites the Quran and does not try to act upon it, may be more likely to be cursed and punished by Allah, the Exalted. The Quran and Hadith both state that such a person is not a believer in the Quran. Unless you are sincere in your intentions and make the first move to change your life according to the Quran, you shall receive no benefit whatsoever by such recitation.

F. The life of the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him)

23. In order to fully absorb the Quran into your heart and soul, you must be as close as you can be to the Prophet (PBUH), who was the first recipient of the Quran. His whole life is a living model of the Quran. If you want to see the Quran in action, study the daily conduct and behavior of the Prophet (PBUH). Aisha, his wife stated

that his conduct was nothing but the Quran. In order to move close to the Prophet (PBUH), you should read his Ahadith (sayings), his Sunnah (conduct), and his Seerah (life history).

These are just a few of the guide lines for receiving the blessings of the Quran. A reader may follow those that he prefers and also add a few according to his personal needs. Nevertheless, the blessings of the Quran will come only to the one who makes a sincere effort to receive them.

Chapter 5

WHAT THE QURAN STATES ABOUT THE QURAN

And if you are in doubt as to what We (Allah) have revealed (Quran) to our servant (Mohammad,PBUH), then produce a Sura (chapter) like therein, and call your witnesses (supporters and helpers) besides Allah, if you are truthful (in your doubts). But if do it not, and you will never be able to do it, then fear the Fire whose fuel is men and stones, prepared for the unbelievers. Baqara 2: 23

This prophecy of the Quran came; “You will never be able to do it” came true. No one during the last fourteen centuries was able to prove otherwise

Do they (unbelievers) not ponder on the Quran? If it had been from someone other than Allah, they would surely have found therein much contradiction. Nisa 4: 82

More than fourteen centuries have gone by and no one could yet find a single contradiction in the Quran.

This Quran is not such as can be produced by other than Allah; but it is a confirmation of what was (revealed) before, and a fuller explanation of the (previous) Books; wherein there is no doubt, (that it is revealed) from the Lord of the Worlds. Or do they (unbelievers) say: “He (Mohammad, PBUH) forged it?” Say: “then bring forth a Sura (chapter) like unto it, and call upon (for assistance) whoever you can besides Allah, if you are truthful.

Younes 10: 37-38

Or do they (unbelievers) say: "He (Muhammad, PBUH) had forged it (this Quran)?". Nay! They believe not. Let them then produce (at least) a recital like unto it, if they are truthful.

Toor 52: 33-34

(O Muhammad, PBUH!): Say "If the whole of mankind and Jinn were to assemble together in order to produce the like of this Quran, they could not produce the like thereof, even if they backed up each other with help and support". We have explained every (kind of) parable for mankind in this Book, yet most men refuse to do anything except disbelief.

Bani Israel 17: 88-89

(O Muhammad, PBUH!) Neither did you read any book before it (Quran), nor did you write any book (whatsoever) with your right hand, in that case, indeed, the followers of falsehood would have had (a cause) for the doubts (in the Quran).

Ankabut 49: 28

Verily, it is We (Allah) who sent down the Message (the Quran), and surely, We will guard it (from any corruption).

Hijr 15: 9

Muslims and Non Muslims equally agree that no change has ever occurred in the text of the Quran

It is He (Allah), who has sent down to you the Book (The Quran); in it are verses that are clear; they are the foundation of the Book; others are allegorical; those in whose hearts is deviation, follow the part that is allegorical, seeking discord and searching for its hidden meaning, but no one knows its hidden meaning except Allah; and those who are firmly founded in knowledge, say: " We believe in the Book, the whole of it is from our

Lord"; and none will grasp the Message except men of understanding.

Al-e-Imran 3: 7

Verily this Quran does guide to that (path) which is most right, and gives glad tidings to those who believe and work righteous deeds; that they shall have a magnificent reward.

Bani Israel 17: 9

Verily, We (Allah) have revealed the book in truth for mankind; So whoever accepts the guidance, benefits his own soul, but he that strays away injures his own soul.

Zumar 39: 41

This is indeed a noble Quran. Preserved in a Book well guarded. None shall touch it but those who are clean. It is a revelation from the Lord of the Worlds. Is it such a Message that you should hold in light esteem? And instead of (thanking Allah for the provision he gave you), you deny (this Message)? Then why do you not (intervene) when (the soul of a dying man) reaches its throat?. And you (sit there helpless) looking upon. But We are nearer to him than you, and you do not see it. Then why do you not, if you are exempt from account bring back the soul, if you are true (in denying this message)?

Waqia 56: 77-87

(O Mankind!) We (Allah) have certainly sent down for you a Book (Quran), in which is a message for you; will you not then understand.

Anbiya 21: 10

And We (Allah) have indeed made the Quran easy to understand and remember; then is there any that will receive admonition.

Qamar 54: 17

And We (Allah) sent down the Quran that which is a healing and mercy to those who believe, and it increases the wrong doers nothing but loss.

Asra 17: 82

O mankind! There has come to you a good advice (Quran) from your Lord, and a healing for (all diseases of) the heart, and a guidance and mercy for the believers.

Younes 10:57

All praise is due to Allah, who has sent down upon His Servant (Muhammad, PBUH), the Book (Quran), and has not placed therein any crookedness. (He has made it) clear to warn you of severe punishment from him (to those who disbelieve), and to give glad tidings to those who believe, (and) do righteous deeds that they will have a good reward.

Kahf 18: 1-2

Alif Lam Ra This is a Book which we (Allah) have sent down to you (O Muhammad!) so that you might bring mankind out of darkness into the light by permission of their Lord; to the path of the Exalted in Power, the Praiseworthy.

Ibraheem 14: 1

And this (Quran) is a Blessed Book, We (Allah) have revealed, so follow it, and fear Allah that you may receive mercy. (We revealed) lest you say; "the Book was only sent down to two groups (Jews and Christians) before us, but we, in fact were, unaware of what they studied.. Or lest you say:" If only the Book has been revealed to us, we should have been better guided than they (Jews and Christians); So now has come to you a clear proof from your Lord, and a guidance and mercy; then who is more unjust than one who denies the Ayat (verses) of Allah, and turns away from them? We shall recompense those who turn away from Our Ayat (verses) with the worst of punishment for their turning away. Do they then wait for

anything other than that the angels should come to them, or that your Lord should come, or that there come some of his (more) clear signs of your Lord should come; the Day that some (such) of the signs of your Lord do come, no good will it do to a person to believe then, if he believed not before, nor earned good deeds through his faith, say: "Wait you! indeed we are (also) waiting. An'am 5: 155-157